RESIGNATION

TO THE

Divine Good Pleasure

In every condition:

RECOMMENDED,

AS THE

DUTY and HAPPINESS

OF

Every Good Man.

IN A

SERMON

From 2 *SAM.* XV. 26.

LONDON:

Printed for *Tho. Cockerill*, at the *Three Legs* in the *Poultrey*, over-against the *Stocks-Market*. 1684.

A Letter from the Author of the following Sermon, to his Friend, concerning it.

SIR,

I *Have herewith ſent you the Sermon you deſired, and wiſh it may contribute any thing to promote that* Reſignation *to the Will of God, wherein ſo much of our Duty and preſent Happineſs conſiſts. Nothing but the* ſeaſonableneſs of the Subject *can be a ſufficient motive to make it publick. And while we live in a troubleſome and ſinful World, and in an Age of Changes, it muſt needs be* ſeaſonable. *Could we meet all Events with a prepared mind (which this* Reſignation *will aſſiſt us to do), we might find a more eaſie paſſage through the* miſeries *of this life, to the* bleſſedneſs *of another, than moſt men do. It would eſtabliſh us againſt all our fears, and fix us under all Changes, and*

give us inward peace in deſpite of the World: It would compoſe our Spirits, *and quiet our thoughts under the viciſſitudes of human Affairs. It might be our Refuge in a* Storm, *our eaſe in trouble, our light in darkneſs; and give us Manna in a Wilderneſs, and Food in a Defart: It would be an Helmet againſt the approach of Evil, and afford us conſolation under actual ſufferings: Yea, 'twould furniſh us with the* trueſt ſatisfaction *when we proſper in the World. We may then be aſſured, that what ſeemeth good, is really ſo; was deſigned for our good by the Divine care, and conduceth to it by the guidance of his infallible counſel. If you think the following Sermon may be of any uſe to ſuch excellent purpoſes, I pray God accompany it with his bleſſing. I kiſs your Hand, and remain,*

Sir,

Your Affectionate Friend,

and Humble Servant,

SHOWER.

Reſignation to the Divine good pleaſure in every condition.

2 SAM. XV. 26.

But if he thus ſay, I have no delight in thee, *Behold here I am, let him do unto me as ſeemeth good unto him.*

THE particular occaſion of theſe words was the fears and diſtreſs of *David* by *Abſalom*'s Rebellion; an account whereof we have in the preceding Verſes. It came Ver. 7. to paſs after Forty years, that *Abſalom*, who by various Artifices had gain'd the hearts of the people, begs leave of his Father to go to *Hebron*; for which he pretends Religion, and a Vow to the Lord, as the ground of his Requeſt, and the Reaſon of his departure. The moſt probable computation of theſe Forty years, is from the time when the *Iſraelites* firſt deſired a King. *David* had now reigned

Seven and Thirty years; to which, if we add the Three years of *Saul*'s Reign, *viz.* one with *Samuel*, and Two alone, it anſwers to that number. With his father's conſent, he goes to *Hebron*, about Sixteen
Ver. 10. Miles from *Jeruſalem*, the place of his own Nativity, and the Metropolis of *Juda*: The Father *there* began his Reign, and the Son deſigns *there* to begin his Rebellion. Two hundred of *David*'s Houſhold are perſwaded to follow him thither in the ſimplicity of their hearts. Their abſence from his Father might weaken his Party, and their preſence with *Abſalom* gain credit with the people, That 'twas by the King's Commiſſion and Order he ſhould aſſume the Government. The ſubtilty of *Achitophel* aſſiſted very much to the contrivance and management of
Ver. 12. this and other Policies to the ſame purpoſe. The Conſpiracy begins to be ſtrong, and the number of Voluntiers doth every day encreaſe. The love of novelty and change, with the Careſſes of an handſome young Prince, and ſome contempt of *David*'s Age, engag'd divers of the people to joyn in that Treaſon which an undutiful Son, and a diſloyal Stateſman had before contriv'd and hatcht. *David* being quickly inform'd of *Abſalom*'s deſign, and the ſtrength
Ver. 14. of his growing Party, reſolves to retreat from *Jeruſalem*, to prepare for reſiſtance, and prevent a threatned Ruine. *Ittai*, a Foreigner, with many of his own Subjects, and moſt of his Domeſtick Servants, teſtifie their love and duty by tears and lamentations,
Ver. 17, 18, and accompany him over the Brook *Kidron*, towards the way of the Wilderneſs, between *Jeruſalem* and *Jerico*. *Zadock* and *Abiathar*, the Prieſts, are deſired by the King to return back to the City with the

Ark

Ark of God, being loath to hazard *that*, and those who attended it; or supposing they could do him more service by tarrying at *Jerusalem*: tho' 'tis most probable the removal of the Ark from *thence* was not a fault, as some imagine, because at that time it was not fixt to a certain place, as afterwards. But whatever were the Reason, he desires the Ark might be carried back: *For*, saith he, *if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and I shall see both it, and his holy habitation.* Ver. 25. But if the Lord should say, I have no delight in thee, *Behold, here I am, let him do to me what seemeth good unto him.*

He wholly refers himself to the issue of Divine Providence, professing his readiness to comply with the Will of God, whatsoever the event shall declare it to be. Now that *David*'s Example may be a president to us for a calm submission to the Divine good pleasure, amidst the many casualties of human life, and our frequent disappointment thereby, I shall endeavour to show from these Words:

1. What is necessary to this Resignation of our selves in every thing to the Will of God.
2. What abundant Reason we have thus to refer our selves to God's dispose.
3. The advantages and benefits of doing so.
4. Improve it by some Inferences of Truth and Duty, which this Subject may suggest for our instruction and practice.

1. What is requisite to this intire Resignation of our selves to the Will of God. And there are some

things necessary in reference to *God*, others which regard *our selves*, and other things which relate to the *affairs of this present life*, wherewith we shall have some concern during our abode on earth.

1. In relation to *God* 'tis requisite,

1. That we firmly believe his Being and Providence. We ought to be convinc't and satisfied, that there is a gracious Creator, and wise Governour of all things, in whose hands we are, and within the compass of whose care and providence are all his Works: That all the powers and abilities of Creatures are from him; that they execute his will, perform his pleasure, and are the instruments of his Decrees: and that it being his part to manage and direct, 'tis ours to submit and acquiesce in his Government, and adore his Will. If we believe that his order or permission be concerned in every event, what should follow but a devotion of all to his choice, with an hearty well-pleasedness in the rank and station wherein God shall place us? An infinite God, ordering all the issues of time, we shall never have any Reason to distrust the care of his Providence, to question his Faithfulness, or dispute his Soveraignty, or impeach his Righteousness or Wisdom in any thing that befalls us. And if we can have no Reason for any of these, we may safely resign our selves to him in the words of the *Church*, *Lord, thou shalt chuse our inheritance for us.* Psal. 47. 4.

By a Reflection on God as Creator and Governour of the World, we may argue our selves into this Resignation: "Did he make, and doth he govern the "Universe, and can he not order my affairs to the "best

" beſt advantage? Hath exquiſite Wiſdom, Good-
" neſs and Power fram'd all things out of nothing,
" and will he not rule all things which he hath made
" in the beſt manner? Hath his Providence preſerv'd
" and guided his People in all Ages, and can he not
" direct me? Is his Arm ſhortned, that he cannot de-
" liver me, or his Underſtanding darkned, that he
" knows not how? Hath he conducted ſo many Saints
" to glory by an unerring Wiſdom, and never-failing
" Mercy, and can he poſſibly miſtake the beſt way of
" bringing me thither? From the belief and conſide-
ration of this merciful Providence of our Heavenly Father, we may leave it to him to chuſe our allowance, and diſpoſe of us, and all our affairs, as it ſhall ſeem good in his ſight:

2. 'Tis neceſſary that we often contemplate the Divine *Attributes* and *Promiſes*, which are proper to engage our Reſignation to his Will, and dependance on his Word. We ought ſeriouſly to conſider what a God he is, and what he can do for us, and how far he hath promiſed that he will; that in all the emergencies of life he is able to give us ſuitable relief and help; that he knows all our needs, and how to ſupply them, and is willing to do ſo when 'tis moſt ſeaſonable and fitteſt to be done. Such an apprehenſion of his *Almighty Arm* is neceſſary, as may diſpoſe us at once to truſt him in a way of duty, and yet to deſpair of ſucceſs in an unlawful undertaking. Such a believing conſideration of his *Wiſdom*, as will prevent our queſtioning whether that be beſt which his holy Will declares to be ſo: and of his *Truth* and *Faithfulneſs*, as will ſtrengthen our Faith in his Power, to extricate us out of every diſtreſs: Such a perſwaſion

of

of his *love* and *kindneſs*, as will excite our gratitude, and preſerve us from doubting of the good iſſue of what he ſhall pleaſe to order. Moreover, ſuch a review of his *gracious promiſes*, as may encourage our dependance on his word, That he will grant the deſires of thoſe that fear him, and be ever mindful of his covenant. That his grace ſhall be ſufficient for us. That all things ſhall work for good to them that love God. That we ſhall not be tempted above what we are able. That they that fear the Lord ſhall want nothing that is good. That in a publick ſtorm he will be a refuge and an hiding place to his people. That the rod of the wicked ſhall not always reſt on the lot of the righteous. That the God of *Iſrael*, who is the Saviour thereof in the time of trouble, a God working Salvation in the midſt of the Earth, can take the wicked in their own craftineſs, inſnare them in the works of their own hands, make them periſh by their own counſels, and fall into the pits which they have dig'd for others; baffle their policies, prevent their deſigns, alter their purpoſes, blaſt their expectations, and defeat their Plots, and bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs: and ſave his people when no other arm can bring Salvation, *&c.* 'Tis neceſſary to believe that not only he *can* but *will* accompliſh what he hath promiſed; and His Attributes are the ground of our faith in this particular. For if any others do *will* our good, they may want *power* to effect it; but *Omnipotence* is here our ſecurity. They are *mutable*, and may recal their word, or alter their mind; but God's *Truth* is as inviarable as his Power is infinite. Men may find a neceſſity to fail their promiſes, by reaſon of ſomewhat they did not foreſee,

foreſee, their knowledg being bounded as well as their ſtrength; but unſearchable Wiſdom can never be miſtaken. The moſt intricate occurrences of time being open and naked from eternity to the view of his Omniſcience, no occaſion can be ſuppoſed why God ſhould not be faithful to his word. The conſideration whereof will have a very great influence on this reſignation of our ſelves to his good pleaſure.

2. Some things are neceſſary with reſpect to *our ſelves.*

1. That we expect ſufferings, troubles, and diſappointments in the World. Religion will not exempt us from the ordinary calamities of human life, to which every man is incident, tho we abſtract from the conſideration of the Goſpel, and Conſcience. What ſenſible afflictions had *David* by his neareſt Relations! how frequent occaſions of ſorrow did he meet with in the time of his Father-in-law *Saul*, from *Michaels* folly, and her Father's hatred! what breaches in his Family, and diviſions in his Kingdom afterwards! his Subjects revolt from their obedience, and his own Children in the head of an Army againſt him. He is forc'd to make War againſt thoſe whom he would not hurt. How ſmart an affliction in his *Tamar* and *Ammon*, and his beloved *Abſolom*, during his whole Life, (one inſtance whereof the context relates) and at his death too: and after that, in the combination of his Son *Adonijah* with *Joab*, &c. And why ſhould we expect to be exempted? Let us count upon it as our Lot and Portion, if we would be able under actual ſufferings to reſign and ſubmit to the will of God. 2 Sam 18. 22, 23

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As to the caſe of ſuffering for conſcience ſake, we are bid to expect it, and have reaſon to prepare for it. 'Tis the voice of Heaven, That *through many tribulations we muſt enter into glory.* Chriſtianity injoyns us to look for perſecution and the *Croſs*: and hath made a Covenant of Sufferings, and promis'd bleſſings to it. Moſt of our graces are paſſive, and adapted to a ſuffering ſtate; and as followers of the Captain of our Salvation, we muſt expect our ſhare. But for the moſt part we are unwilling to hear of calamities before they come; and then we cannot bear them, becauſe they come *ſuddenly*; 'tis the unexpectedneſs of the Croſs, that is the ſubject matter of our complaints in the day of adverſity. We think it irkſom and unpleaſant to forecaſt how the caſe would be, if God ſhould try us in ſuch or ſuch an inſtance, if he ſhould call for ſuch a bleſſing we value, ſnatch from us ſuch a relation whom we tenderly love, or fruſtrate our deſigns and hopes in ſuch a particular; and therefore we will not conſider it beforehand, and then the ſurprizal adds a ſting to the calamity. For no kind of evils are ſo amazing and terible, as thoſe which are unexpected; the ſuddenneſs of them deprives us of that ſtayedneſs of mind which is requiſite to a due deportment under ſuch a tryal. And our paſſions then tranſport us into many indecent exceſſes, and make us foam with impatient murmurs, and caſt up mire and dirt.

2. Let us always maintain an humble penitent ſenſe of ſin, and our own unworthineſs. This is neceſſary, becauſe Pride will indiſpoſe us for ſubmiſſion to the Divine Will. And if we joyn impenitence, 'twill make us contend with the Almighty; overlook

look his Goodneſs, deſpiſe his Wiſdom, diſtruſt his Faithfulneſs, and find faults with his Providence, as if things could be better ordered than they are by Gods management. Whereas an humble Soul, ſenſible of the deſert of ſin, thinks every condition good enough, and ſo is willing to be at God's diſpoſe. 'Lord (will ſuch a man ſay, with admiring thoughts of 'the divine goodnes and bounty) what can be too lit-'tle for me who am leſs than the leaſt of all thy mer-'cies? What temporal calamities too ſevere, when 'I deſerve eternal? What condition too low that 'is on this ſide the bottomleſs pit? What cup too 'bitter where thy wrath, and remedileſs 'deſpair, are none of the Ingredients? Am 'I not thy creature, and mayeſt thou not do what 'thou wilt *with thy own*? Have I not provok't 'thee, and ſhall I not receive correction? Have I 'merited damnation, and can I be wronged and in-'jur'd by a temporal ſorrow? What are gentle Rods 'to fiery Scorpions? And the light and momentary 'afflictions of this life, to the agonies and torments 'of an eternal *Tophet*? Oh pardon me now, and 'ſave me at laſt, and do with me what ſeemeth good 'in thy ſight. Deny me not an entrance into *Hea-'ven*, and let thy will be done upon *earth*.

This is the proper Language of an humble penitent, referring himſelf to the divine choice, as to every thing in this World.

3. Some things are neceſſary *reſpecting the affairs of this preſent world.*

1. That we have right notions of *Proſperity* and *Adverſity*, of temporal good and evil. For according to

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the Judgment we make of theſe, will our Paſſions be exercis'd: We ought therefore to endeavour to underſtand what is their due value, and what eſtimate in Reaſon we ſhould make of them: We ought to conſider, as to the good, That it is fleeting and inconſtant, uncertain and temporal; may be loſt on a ſudden, and muſt be left ſhortly; that no outward advantages above others, do on that account rfcommend us to God, or intitle us to his favour; That 'tis no Argument of his diſpleaſure to *be* poor and deſpiſed, to be afflicted and calamitous; that *bread is not alway to the wiſe, nor riches to men of underſtanding*, Ecl. 9 11. but *time and chance happens to them all*; That all things under the Sun are mutable, and 'tis a madneſs to think they will never change; That 'tis neceſſary God ſhould make a difference and variety in the conditions of men, that ſome ſhould be rich, and others poor, Becauſe neither could ſubſiſt without both: The meanneſs of ſome is no leſs needful to the order and harmony of the World, than the greatneſs and abundance of others: the Rich cannot live comfortably without the Poor, nor the latter be ſupported without the former. Beſides, 'tis to be conſidered, That a proſperous condition, without God's bleſſing to improve it, will but adminiſter to our ſin, increaſe our guilt, and advance our ruin; That an abundance of Temporal enjoyments is attended with many dangerous temptations; and very few periſh by *Famine*, in compariſon with thoſe many who die of a *Surfeit*; That there is no Temporal evil but God can ſupport us under, and ſanctifie for our good; That the loſs of life is the utmoſt we can fear; and having the promiſes of a future bleſſedneſs, that is not to be dreaded;

dreaded; and if our lives are ſpared, we can only be deprived a little ſooner of thoſe comforts which otherwiſe we muſt relinquiſh when we quit the body: And ſuppoſe the worſt that can poſſibly befall us, the time of its continuance cannot be long; within a few years, ſuppoſe Thirty, or Forty, and hardly that number of the greateſt Aſſembly ſhall then be left alive: And after this life we ſhall meet with no diſappointment evermore to trouble us; no croſs Providence to try our patience, or require our ſubmiſſion; no ſudden loſs or caſualty to be the matter of a complaint; no publick ſtorm, or private adverſity to diſcompoſe us. And having this hope in us, as to *the other life*, for ſhame let us reſign all things to the Will of God, as to *this*. And if we conſider our ſelves either as Men or Chriſtians, the calamities and ſufferings to which we are expoſed are ſo many, that 'tis a merciful diſpenſation our Leaſe is ſhortned, and the number of our ſorrowful days on Earth diminiſht; that whereas our Fore-fathers were train'd up in the School of the Croſs for many hundred years, we are not to live ſo long, but may hope to get to *Heaven* ſooner; aud *there only* remains a Reſt for the people of God.

2. 'Tis neceſſary that we mortifie our love to this World, and moderate our Affections to earthly things. Love ſeems to be the meaſure and Origine of all other Paſſions: And if this preſent World, and its injoyments, be inordinately lov'd, we ſhall be apt to repine or deſpond when evil befalls us. Our ſorrow by the loſs of outward bleſſings, will hold proportion with our fond Affection, while we poſſeſs'd them; and our dejection under calamity be proportion'd to

our fears, leſt it come to paſs: Whereas if our Affections be moderate, and guided by Faith and Reaſon, we ſhall not be much concern'd at the evils we can ſuffer: we ſhall not much trouble our ſelves for the want of that which we neither value nor love, but within the limits preſcribed us by God: For what we embrace with the greateſt fondneſs, that we part from with the greateſt regret. And as many ways may we be *miſerable*, as there are variety of accidents to ſeparate us from what we *inordinately love*. This is the great Reaſon why the calamities we ſuffer, diſſolve our patience, and rob us of our peace, Becauſe we love this World too well, and are over-fond of that which we may eaſily loſe. And how quickly may that man be miſerable, if there be ſo many Worms can make that Gourd wither which he ſits under the ſhadow of, with inordinate ſatisfaction? Nay, *with* Temporal injoyments, or *without* them, we can never be at reſt, if we love them too well; for all our days we are either perplext with *fear* leſt they ſhould be loſt, or with *ſorrow* in caſe they are. If we love any thing very much, beſides God, 'tis ſeldom but we meet with occaſions for as great a ſorrow as we entertain the Object with an undue Affection: But loving God above all, and every thing elſe only according to his preſcription, would make us willing to be at his diſpoſe, and content with his order: What pleaſeth him, cannot then diſpleaſe us; and what is according to his mind, cannot contradict ours; and ſo we may ſpeak it from our hearts, *let him do unto us as ſeemeth good unto him.*

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2. Let us consider what abundant Reason we have thus to refer our selves to God's dispose:

1. Upon the account of our *Profession.*
2. Our *Duty.*
3. Our *Interest.*

1. Upon the account of our *Profession.* We own our selves the Disciples and Followers of the Holy Jesus, who as he chearfully performed, so he patiently submitted to the Will of his Father, declaring his Resignation under his sharpest Conflicts; *Father, not my will, but thine be done.* And as we are Redeemed by his Death, and are the price of his Blood, we are obliged by his Example. We profess to follow him as the Captain of our Salvation, and ought to remember he was the most glorious instance of submission and patience, of trust in God, and resignation to his Will, that ever the World was acquainted with. As his Victory should be our Encouragement, his Example must be our Pattern: As *he was perfected by sufferings*, and stoop'd to the severest ones, to purchase glory for us, we are directed to expect our share, to prepare us to partake of that glory. To *consider him who endur'd the contradiction of sinners against himself*, is propounded as an expedient against *fainting in our minds:* And so it may prove, if in imitation of him, we are satisfied in every thing with the Will of our Father. We call God *Father*, and own our selves his *Children*; and shall we not be content he should chuse our Allowance, and dispose of our Conditions? We pray that *his will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven*; and shall we be displeased

Mat. 26. 39.

Heb. 2.10.

Heb. 12.3.

that

that our prayers are answered, and that he doth as we desire him, that is, *what seemeth good in his sight?* The blessed Spirits above, flee whereſoever they are sent, chearfully obey his Will, and execute his Pleasure; and shall not *we* be satisfied with his Government, and pleased with his Orders, and *drink of that* Joh. 18. 11. *cup which our heavenly Father gives us to drink?* Certainly we may trust his *Wisdom*, because he is *God*; and his *Love* and *Faithfulness*, because he is a *Father*, who knowing what is best for us, will do nothing but what really is so. We know that every Commission concerning the events of time, is signed by our Father's own hand; and do we think he will set his hand to what is really for the prejudice of his own Children, whom he tenderly loves? What we shall eat and drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed, where we shall lodg, and what we shall do and be, and how in every thing we shall be disposed of, are things that belong to his Paternal Government to order; and obedient Children will leave it to their Father's care, and acquiesce in his choice.

2. Upon the account of *Duty*.

1. In *gratitude* for his abundant kindness, whereof we have had already such large experience.

He formed us in the Womb, and brought us into light with our intire senses and integral parts: He dispos'd of us in our Infancy, educated our Childhood, and guided our Youth, and hath compassed us about with mercy on every side: The streams of his Fountain have continually refresht us, and shall we overlook the innumerable instances of his past kindness, by not trusting him for the future?

We

We cannot fully diſplay his benefits, their wonderful greatneſs, or undiſcerned freeneſs, their exceſſive multitude, and large extent; their ſuitableneſs and ſeaſonableneſs, their convenience and duration, *&c.* Our imaginations cannot conceive the dimenſions of his Goodneſs, nor our ſpeech utter them; ſuch as the advantages of our Education, the protection of his Providence, the proviſions of his Bounty, the reſtraints of his Grace, the priviledg of his Goſpel, and the aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit; his goodneſs to our Bodies, and to our Souls; to our Friends and Relatives, in all the places wherever we have liv'd, and in all the portions of our time hitherto; ſome bleſſings immediately from God, and others from ſuch inſtruments to whom God gave the Will and the Power, the Capacity and the Opportunity, and Inclination of doing us good. How many hazards that we thought inevitable, hath he reſcu'd us from? How many difficulties that we thought inſuperable, hath his Wiſdom and Power enabled us to wade through and conquer? From how many ſurpriſing Caſualties hath he ſecur'd us? From how many Maladies and infectious Diſeaſes hath he preſerv'd us? How many unobſerv'd dangers hath his care prevented? How many of our fears hath he delivered us from? How many of our doubts hath he wiſely reſolved? How many of our prayers hath he graciouſly anſwered? He hath given us eaſe and health, rais'd us from ſickneſs, and pluckt us often from the Jaws of Death: Have we met with Affliction? we have either had preſent ſupport, or ſpeedy deliverance; he hath either diverted the calamity, or given us ſtrength to bear it: he hath known our ſouls in the day of Adverſity, and ſuccour'd us

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from fainting in the hour of diſtreſs. And if the rod were not preſently remov'd, he increas'd our patience, and ſanctified the viſitation, and in the iſſue *'twas good that we were afflicted.* Moreover; no affliction we have been under, but had many concomitant Mercies (unmixed miſery is only the portion of Hell, as perfect bliſs the ſtate of Heaven.) And why *ſhould we not receive ſome evil at the hand of God, as well as*
Job 2. 10. *good?* Eſpecially conſidering the vaſt diſproportion. For how *many* bleſſings have we received to *one* adverſity? When ſome mercies are *taken*, are not others *left* of the ſame or greater conſequence? Have you loſt *part* of your eſtate? did not God give the *whole*; and doth not he continue *health*, without which you could not injoy *any* of it? Are *ſome* of your Relations ſnatcht away by Death? doth not God continue or raiſe up *others* in their room? Therefore in the day of *Adverſity conſider*, as well as in the
Eccl. 7. 14. day of *Proſperity* rejoyce, *for God hath ſet the one over againſt the other.* If then he ſhould deprive us of what we now have, we ought to be thankful we had it ſo long, and content if we injoy it no longer; and conſequently be willing he ſhould do with us *what ſeemeth good unto him.* The greateſt *evils* we can now ſuffer, are conſiſtent with his favour, which is our *chiefeſt good*; and the good we have received already, is more and greater than the evils we have felt or fear. And have we taſted ſo much of his bounty, and ſhall we quarrel at a change of Providence? What condition have we ever paſſed through, but the preſent mercies of that condition would more than counterpoiſe the calamities and ſorrows of it? The meaſures of God's Grace, ſay the *Jewiſh Rabbins*, is larger

ger than the meaſure of his judgment. For one croſs we have many bleſſings. Have you not the Love of God, the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience, the Influence of the Holy Spirit, the Miniſtry of Angels, the Promiſes of the Goſpel, and the Hopes of Glory? Theſe you have kept, or might have kept, notwithſtanding all your afflictions. After ſuch reflections as theſe, can we reaſonably ſuppoſe that there will ever be any juſt ground of diſſatisfaction in God's diſpoſal? Ever any reaſon for us to quarrel with his Providences, and be diſpleaſed with what he doth? *He hath done us good and not evil all our days* hitherto; and are we loth to be guided by ſo Gracious a Father? Are we unwilling to be diſpoſed of by ſo good a God?

2. We ought in *duty* to reſign to his will, if he had not thus oblig'd us by his benefits, becauſe we are his *Creatures*, and owe him ſubjection, and becauſe by our many ſins we deſerve his wrath. He hath an undoubted right to order us by his Providence, as well as govern us by his Law. And 'tis a vile contempt of the Authority and Wiſdom of our *Abſolute Soveraign*, to diſpute his will. We cannot ſuffer any evil of affliction but what is of his ſending. Poverty as well as Riches is his gift. *The Lord* gave, and *the Lord* hath taken, *bleſſed be his holy name. The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is maker of them both. I was dumb and open'd not my mouth, becauſe thou, O Lord, didſt it*, ſaith *David. It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth good unto him*, ſaith *Eli*. We owe obedience to all the inſtances of his declared will. And when we ſee his hand at the bottom of the Warrant, ſilent ſubmiſſion becomes us, as we are

Job 1. 21. Prov. 22. 2. Pſal. 39. 8. 1 Sam 3. 17.

his creatures; especially considering that we have provok'd him, and deserv'd his Wrath; that all the good we receive is undeserved, but none of the evil we suffer is so. We cannot challenge his favour, or merit his love; and therefore should be thankful for every mercy. We cannot but confess that we deserve his judgments, and therefore should humbly submit to every Affliction: *Shall we not bear the indignation of the Lord, having sinn'd against him? Shall we not accept the punishment of our iniquities,* especially when 'tis *less than our sins deserve?* Hath God removed any one comfort we did not forfeit? Doth he inflict any one calamity we did not merit? And ought we not with thankfulness to acknowledg his mercy, and with intire submission resign unto his good pleasure?

Mic. 7. 9. Lev. 26. 41. Ezra 9. 13.

3. Upon the account of *Interest.* We are not only obliged to this *Resignation* of our selves to the Will of God, in duty to him, but for our own Interest and Convenience; Because,

1. God knows better what is good for us than we can possibly do our selves.

2. Because having resign'd all to his Will, the worst that can befall us will be really for our good.

1. God knows better what is good for us than we can possibly do our selves. We think that to be evil which God brings about for good. From the finiteness of our Nature, and the feebleness of our Reason, we can't view the full circuit of his Providence,

dence, or discern the gracious design in every dispensation which he infallibly carries on, and will at length discover. We have nevertheless the highest Reason to adore his Will, and hold the general conclusion, that *whatever he doth is best*, and *'twill be beautiful in its season:* 'Tis therefore our Interest to refer our selves to him; *For man knoweth not what is good for himself in this life.* God, like a wise Physitian, may consult our health, when he doth not gratifie and please our Palates: He may deny us in some particulars, to grant us in others, which will be more for our advantage: He may contradict our designs and wishes, to secure our greater good. How many men who have waited for a Wind, and miss'd it, have fretted and disquieted themselves for being occasionally absent when the Ship set Sail, who soon after have thank't the Providence of God for preserving their lives by so cross an accident, when they heard that the Ship perisht in the Voyage, and all the men were drown'd?

Eccl. 3. 11.

Eccl. 6. 12.

We know not how much God may be *befriending* us, when we think he acts like an *enemy*. As he gives us many things by his Providence for our good, which we afterwards find to be so, but would not have chosen; so he takes away many with the same design, which we are loth to part with. God may take away one blessing which we prize, to substitute another in the room of it that is much superior. So that were we offer'd our choice, what we would have, we could not do wiser than to put the choice to him again, and desire him to chuse for us: For we behold not the series of good or evil consequences which would follow upon our Wishes, if they should be granted.

That may be good on a naked proſpect, which a ſeries of depending events may turn to evil: And ſo on the contrary. But God who holdeth the Chain of all Cauſes in his view, ſeeth what reference one part hath to another, and ſo orders all as may beſt attain his great deſign, and our trueſt intereſt. *Jacob* underſtood not till afterwards, that the loſs of *Joſeph* was the means of his advancement to the Throne of *Egypt*, and the preſervation of his Family in a Famine, the intended iſſue. His Brethren ſold him for a Slave, that he might not become their Maſter: And by that very means it came to paſs, that *their ſheaves bowed down to his*, according to his dream. We only take notice of what is good *at preſent*, but know not what would be ſo for the *remainder* of our lives: but God can order things ſo as to be for our greater and more laſting good. And hereafter we ſhall find, that what now afflicts us, was a real kindneſs and advantage. Even thoſe barren Women in *Jeruſalem*, who long'd to become joyful Mothers, and *for want of children, would not be comforted*; when *Titus* ſack't the City, and the Inhabitants were deſtroyed by Fire, Sword, Famine, and all ſorts of Calamities, they then found the words of our Saviour to be true, *Bleſſed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never gave ſuck.*

Beſides, we know not what is beſt for us, as we ſtand related to others, and in reference to the *publick*. The publick good of Mankind may be promoted by our private inconvenience and loſs; and of that, God is the beſt Judg. We are troubled at the fruſtration of our endeavours and hopes, as to ſome inſtances, when that diſappointment may conduce to the

the publick advantage, becauſe we ſhould but have got into the room and place of our betters, who are of greater uſe and ſervice to the common Intereſt of Chriſtianity, and the general good of the World. And ſhould we have our Wills in one particular againſt the purpoſe of God, it may be it would croſs the deſigns of God in a thouſand others: for *great things may depend upon that which we would have to be otherwiſe than it is.* *Laſtly*, God only knows what is *beſt* for us in order to our *eternal happineſs.* All men would chuſe to be *proſperous* in the World; but how many thouſands would *periſh*, and be undone, if they were *ſo?* Riches may impoveriſh and ruin us; *health* and *ſtrength* may *weaken* and undo us; and that which we deſire and chuſe may prove a curſe and a ſnare, an inducement to ſin, and ſhut us out of *Heaven.* We know not how we could grapple with the temptations of an higher condition. All men cannot carry a full cup without ſpilling, or be advanc't very high but their heads will turn round. We diſcern not thoſe many inſtances wherein our *Temporal* intereſt would contradict our *Eternal*; where our *preſent* ſatisfaction would be inconſiſtent with our *future* bleſſedneſs. But ſince *God doth*, 'tis our intereſt in all things to reſign to his diſpoſe; and the rather, becauſe,

2. Having reſign'd our ſelves to the Will of God, the *worſt* that can befall us will be really for our *good.* God doth never afflict willingly, or in vain, but in great faithfulneſs to us, and for excellent purpoſes; never without a *juſt cauſe* on our part, and a *gracious deſign* on his. He can no more do an unwiſe act

act than an unholy one, being infinite in Wiſdom as well as in Purity. He intends us *good* by all, and hath promiſed *that* ſhall be the iſſue. He hath put loſſes and calamities, afflictions and Death it ſelf (the Death of others, as well our own) into the *covenant of grace*: they are all compriz'd within a promiſe, and *ſhall work for good.* All the *evil* God at any time inflicts on his Children is only another method of doing them *good*: That *by ſuffering in the fleſh we may ceaſe from ſin*: That when our *hearts are melted like wax*, we may be capable of Divine Impreſſions: That he may *open our ears to diſcipline by the voice of his rod*: Check our Pride, and humble us at his foot; prevent our ſecurity and cure our earthly mindedneſs; perfect our patience, beautify our faith, and repair our inward vigor; imbitter this world, to raiſe us above it, to take us off from our falſe hopes, and carnal dependences; to awaken our ſleepy conſciences, and revive a Spirit of Prayer, *&c.* And the Wiſdom of God doth oftentimes ſuit our neceſſities in theſe particulars, by the kind and ſeaſon of the affliction. And *Bleſſed* are thoſe ſufferings which bring us more into a Conformity to his Holy Image. Happy are thoſe *depreſſions* to the *Earth*, which afterwards *lift* us nearer *Heaven.* Thoſe *ſighs* and *groans* are matter of *joy*, whoſe *eccho* is a more holy and circumſpect Life. And welcome ſhould be that *evil*, which thus effects our greateſt *good.* God, the great Phyſitian of Souls, can Cure *the Plague of the heart* by a bodily *Diſeaſe*; and make one troubleſome diſtemper more effectual than many Sermons. He can teach us ſuch Leſſons from the Houſe of Mourning, as we ſhould never have learnt

Rom 8.28. 1 Cor. 3 21, 22.

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in the Houſe of Feaſting. Yea, he doth ſometimes cauſe his *Rod* to be a *Staff* of comfort, and give the *ſweeteſt inward peace* to his People through ſtreams of *Bitterneſs*. For ſome never read the love of God ſo legibly as under the darkeſt cloud of outward diſtreſs: As the Ark was *neareſt* Heaven when the Waters of the floud were *higheſt*. Beſides, is it not our advantage, if he will prove our ſincerity, and exerciſe our Grace by a change of Providence? To ſee whither we can love him as a *Father*, while we feel his Rod; whether we can believe the truth of his Promiſe, when humane ſuccors fail; whether we can derive our ſupport from his covenant love, when we have little elſe to depend upon; whether we can live upon the *Fountain*, when the ſtreams are cut off and the ciſterns fail. Now if this be the merciful deſign of Heaven in the *worſt* that can befal us, we are traitors to our own *intereſt*, not to reſign our ſelves intirely to him. But this will lead me to the 3*d* particular, to

3. Conſider the *Advantages* and *Benefits* of this *Reſignation* of our ſelves to the Divine good Pleaſure. And they are ſuch as follow.

It will very much prepare us to receive without murmuring the ſmarteſt correction, and qualify us humbly to improve the ſevereſt ſtrokes; Still *encouraging our ſelves in the Lord our God*, to whom we have ſurrendred our ſelves and the management of all our affairs.

It will fit us for Prayer, and diſpoſe us to a Spiritual Communion with God therein. For without ſuch a temper, no prayer reſpecting the things of this life can be acceptable to God.

It will prevent our making uſe of unlawful means to avoid any feared evil, or to extricate our ſelves from any preſent difficulty, becauſe God can bring about good by ſeeming evil. He can *make the earth to help the woman*, accompliſh his gracious deſigns by what ſeems to oppoſe them.

It will ſuppreſs an undue *Inquiſitiveneſs after things future*: And keep us from making uſe of any irregular or ſuſpected methods to be inform'd of what ſhall come to paſs. For keeping within the bounds preſcribed us by God, and managing our affaires with the beſt diſcretion we can, we may be very well ſatisfied by referring the ſucceſs and iſſue to a divine conduct.

It will take us off from blaming ſecond cauſes, and fretting againſt *Inſtruments* under afflictions, and will make us look higher to that hand of Providence which manages the Rod, and hath wiſely appointed it.

It will aſſiſt us to *glorify God in the fire*, acknowledging his ſupremacy, and ſubſcribing to his Wiſdom, and believing his faithfulneſs; and thereby ſatisfying our minds, that if loſſes and diſappointments, poverty or tribulation, or any other calamity, be God's appointment, *that is beſt*. If to be croſt in our deſires, deceiv'd in our expectations, depriv'd of our friends, goods, or reputation, be the Will of God, that is *altogether beſt*. From ſuch a temper we may 'be able to ſay, *Lord here I am*, ready for any ſervice, 'prepared for any ſuffering, girt for any encounter, 'reſolved for any difficulty, and ſatisfied with what-'ſoever thou ſhalt pleaſe to order. Lead me to the 'right hand or to the left: lift me up or caſt me 'down: *Do unto me what ſeemeth good in thy ſight*. I 'ſubmit

'ſubmit to thy direction: I am thine, and at thy diſ-
'poſe, and reſolve to follow thee without diſputing
'thy pleaſure. If thy *Will* be ſuch, and thy *Wiſdom*
'adviſe it, Poverty is better than riches, diſgrace
'than honour, a priſon than liberty, loſſes than poſ-
'ſeſſion, miſſing more eligible than obtaining, fru-
'ſtration a greater kindneſs than ſucceſs, and a
Tempeſt more deſirable than a Sun-ſhine. Such a temper as this will *ſecure the peace of our minds*, and conſequently our happineſs in every condition. For our deſires and choice being ſubjected to the will of God, *our own wills* may be ſaid to be *done*, when *his* is ſo. *Then* only may we have whatſoever we will, when we *will* nothing but what God will give, and are pleaſed with every thing which he thinks fit. Let the weather be fair or fowl, let the world ſmile or frown upon us, by ſuch a frame of heart we may commend our ſelves to the bleſſing of God, with an humble boldneſs invoke his aid, and with a Chriſtian confidence wait the execution of his purpoſes, and expect the performance of his promiſes.

From the preceding diſcourſe we may learn divers things for our *Inſtruction* and *Practiſe*. As

1. This may inſtruct us in the *true reaſon* of mens diſtracting *fears* concerning future events, and their *deſpondency* of mind under actual difficulties, *viz.* the *want of Reſignation to the will of God.*

1. *From thence ariſe our diſtracting fears concerning future events.* For did we upon a ſound belief of the nature and word of God, reſign our ſelves to

him, we should *not be afraid of evil tidings*, or disquiet our minds by the apprehension of approaching evil. God hath secur'd us of all *necessary good*, by his promise, *That there shall be no lack to them who fear the Lord; That bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure.* And no such case can we imagine, wherein God by his Wisdom and Power cannot send us relief, wherein his presence cannot give us support and joy; or any thing fall out but according to his wise counsel, to whom we have resign'd our selves.

Psal. 34. 4. Isa. 33. 16.

2. 'Tis *the want of Resignation is the ground of our despondency and dejection of mind under actual sufferings, and present difficulties.* When any thing happens contrary to our desires, how unreasonably do we repine against God, and torment our selves? send out our complaints against Heaven, and fret against the Governor of the World; or sit down in despondency, as if there were *no hope*, and *no sorrow* were ever *like ours*? Which is a base reflection on the *Providence* of God, an affront to his *soveraignty*, a disparagement of his *Wisdom*, the reproach of his *Goodness*, and the dishonor of his *Truth*. And such a temper is not only *Sinful*, but *Unreasonable* and *Vain*, 'tis both absurd and fruitless. For it not only implies great *unthankfulness* for our present mercies, and supposeth *the preference of our own wishes, before God's appointment*, (as if the Wisdom of God were to be advised by our foolish fancies) But it supposeth an impossibility that things should ever be otherwise, or that any remedy or relief should ever be found out for the evils we suffer. Whereas that wheel of Providence whereby we are now at the bottom, may

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at the next turn, raiſe us up, and ſurprize us by unexpected favours. We know not what bleſſings God deſigneth us, what mercies are teeming in the womb of futurity for us. 'Tis *unreaſonable* to ſuppoſe when we are in adverſity, that things will never alter; and 'tis *in vain* to torment our ſelves, if they do not. For God's Counſels ſhall ſtand, and his will take place, whether we are willing or unwilling. Tho the Birds may flutter and be impatient of confinement, he that carryeth the Cage in his hand will go never the ſlower.

2. Should we reſign our ſelves to the Divine good Pleaſure? *We ought not then over-eagerly to deſire and purſue any temporal good; or be over-earneſt and poſitive in deprecating any temporal evil.* If God grant us the bleſſings we wiſh for, let us praiſe his name by the acknowledgment of his bounty; but if he think good to deny us, we muſt ſit down with ſubmiſſive ſatisfaction without them; Not envying thoſe who have more than we, as believing *we have a goodly heritage, and that the lines are fallen to us in a place* ſufficiently *pleaſant*, becauſe by God's direction. We ſhould not ſet our hearts ſo much on any earthly deſign, as not to be ſatisfied, if we meet with diſappointment; nor on any outward bleſſing, ſo as not to be content to loſe it when God ſhall think it fit. Let us do what we can, and what we ought, and yet leave God to do *what ſeemeth good to him.* For we dare not deliberately wiſh for a total exemption from calamity and ſorrow in this world. What if God ſay to any of us, Since you are unwilling to ſubmit to my conduct, and refuſe to truſt to the care of my Providence, ſince my Wiſdom,

Power, Goodneſs and Truth, are not thought a ſufficient ſecurity; I'le croſs thy deſires no more for the future, in every thing thou ſhalt have thy choice: but beware the event, *&c.* The miſerable caſe of ſuch a perſon thus left in the hands of his own counſel, may convince us of our error.

3. Should we reſign our ſelves intirely to the Divine good pleaſure? *Let us then undertake nothing of any moment or conſequence, without imploring his direction to guide us, and his bleſſing to ſucceed our undertaking.* 'Tis common for men to ask counſel of God, when they are firmly reſolved what to do themſelves. But we ought to have recourſe to God for advice before we are determin'd in our own thoughts, and not lay the plot of our own affairs, as to what we intend to do, and then ſuffer God to come in only as the Executor of our Wills. Our Reſignation to the Will of God would teach us to ask *Counſel* from Heaven, as well as *ſucceſs.*

4. *This may inſtruct us in the unlawfulneſs of anxious prying into futurity, and diſſwade us from it.* Let us mind what God will have us to do, and refer our ſelves to his good pleaſure, and we neither need, nor ſhall be over-ſolicitous what he will do with us. *Our times and ways are in the hand of God*; and in much Wiſdom and Mercy hath he hidden future events, to prevent the confident *preſumption* of ſome, and the melancholy *deſpair* of others, by the certain foreknowledg of what will come to paſs; That we may live by Faith, depending on his Word and Promiſe, and be reſign'd to his Will. 'Tis true, that ſome have tried to mend *their own Fortunes*, by telling *thoſe* of other men, pretending that every man's Temper and Con-

Condition is legible in the Planets, and the future events of Persons and Kingdoms may be known by the Stars: but such may be confuted and reproved by the challenge of God by the Prophet *Isaiah*, when he foretold the destruction of *Babylon*; *Evil shall come upon thee, and thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee, which thou shalt not know. Stand now with thine inchantments, and the multitude of thy sorceries; if so be thou maist be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up, and save thee from the things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble*, &c. If we love to be concerned about futurity, and will be prying into things to come, let our solicitude be imployed about our everlasting state, what will become of our Souls for ever, but let us resign our selves to the Will of God, as to all our Temporal Affairs. Isa. 47. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

We see then upon the whole, what is our *Duty*, and where is our *Happiness*. And thanks be to God who hath graciously connected them together, that by complying with the *former*, we may most effectually secure the *latter*. We are apt to think we can never be happy till our desires are granted; but the Remedy must be by the change of our Minds, and not of God's Providence: For an humble Resignation to his pleasure, with a satisfaction in his choice, would settle the peace of our minds, and silence all our complaints, knowing that God hath an undoubted right to do with us what he pleaseth, because of his *Soveraignty*; and a fitness to rule us for our

our good, becauſe of his *infinite Wiſdom*; and that he will moſt certainly do ſo from his *Mercy* and *Truth*. Let his Promiſes be our Refuge, and his Providence our Comfort; his Wiſdom our ſatisfaction, and his Almighty Power our Encouragement and Support; his Mercy our only Treaſure, and the ſecret of his preſence our Pavilion; chearfully referring all things to his management, ſtedfaſtly depending on him in every ſtrait or difficulty, practically acknowledging him in every diſpenſation of his Providence, and quietly ſubmitting to whatſoever he ſhall order: for *he can do nothing but what is beſt, becauſe he himſelf is infinitely wiſe, and infinitely good.* And were we well in our Wits, we could deſire nothing but what is beſt; and of that God only can judg, and of that we are fully aſſured in every condition.

THE END.